

CHRISTMAS & SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Whole Number 231

OLD TIME BOYS BOOKS

By J. Edward Leithead

Part 3

Next to Edward S. Ellis, my favorite author of cloth-bound books was Harry Castlemon (real name Charles A. Fosdick). All the boys I knew read Castlemon in those days. My first was Frank in the Mountains, borrowed from a friend. I was entranced by that exciting story of trappers and Indians, and the youthful hero, Frank Nelson. Remember Black Bill, the outlaw, and the last ditch fight at Fort Stockton, soldiers and trappers overwhelmed by a redskin horde, those who remained forced to fight their way out with the palisades in flames? Frank and his cousin, Archie Winters, were two of Castlemon's greatest characters. Close seconds were the two trappers who helped the boys through many a perilous situation, Dick Lewis and old Bob Kelly. I have an uncle in California, now in his eighties, who still speaks of the adventures of Frank and Archie, which he read as a boy.

After reading that first volume of Castlemon, you may be sure I looked up the rest of his books, starting with the Gunboat Series of 6 volumes, published by Porter & Coates, then Winston, following Frank and Archie's adventures in Frank, the Young Naturalist, Frank in the Woods, Frank on the Prairie, through the Civil War in Frank on a Gunboat, Frank on the Lower Mississippi, Frank Before Vicksburg; then on into the wild West in the Rocky Mountain Series, Frank Among the Rancheros, Frank at Don Carlos' Rancho, Frank in the Mountains (sure, I read that one again, many times). For Western stories for boys, you can't beat the Rocky Mountain Series.

Nor did these nine volumes end Frank's adventures. He and Archie turned up in the last of the three volumes of the Sportsman's Club Series—Sportsman's Club in the Saddle, Sportsman's Club Afloat, Sportsman's Club Among the Trappers—entering the story in Chapter II, with a footnote stating, "The heroes of the 'Gunboat' and 'Rocky Mountain' series." It is after the close of the Civil War, Frank is Captain Nelson, of the U. S. Navy, now, "nearly twenty-three years old, and Archie a few months younger." Another old friend reappears in this story—Dick Lewis, the trapper. Frank finds Dick in irons at Fort Bolton, accused of being one of a gang of outlaws. Of course, it isn't so—he's working undercover for the colonel commanding the post to roundup the gang.

But Dick complains of the changing times to Frank: "... you don't know what's been agoin' on in this yere country since you left it. Them railroads have come through here, jest as I told you they would; folks from the States have come flockin' in, and settlin', an' killin' the buffaler by thousands, an' now thar ain't elbow-room fur sich fellers as me, nor grub nuther." Before

the story ends, old Bob Kelly, Dick Lewis' trapper chum, also reappears, posing as one of the outlaws.

A new series about Frank and Archie followed, The Frank Nelson Series. In the first volume, Snowed Up, or, The Sportsman's Club in the Mountains, the locale is Western, the same as Among the Trappers, and Dick and old Bob again accompany the boys; but in volume two, Frank and Archie are off to sea, Frank in the Forecastle, or, The Sportsman's Club Among the Whalers, and the two trappers have their first experience on shipboard; in the third and concluding volume they are still adventuring afar, The Boy Traders, or, The Sportsman's Club Among the Boers.

The Pony Express Series contained The Pony Express Rider, Carl, the Trailer (which features the battle of Wounded Knee, terminating the Ghost Dance troubles) and The White Beaver. The latter sounds like a Western story, but isn't one. It always seemed to this reader that it would have been more appropriate to include as the third volume of this series, Castlemon's Winged Arrow's Medicine, or, The Massacre at Fort Phil Kearney, an historical tale with excellent illustrations, although it was apparently published several years after the other three, about 1903, by the Saalfeld Co. The Pony Express Series was published by Henry T. Coates & Co. and Winston.

Then there was Elam Storm, the Wolfer, or, The Lost Nugget, which had a sequel, The Missing Pocket-book, or, Tom Mason's Luck (a Western in spite of its title). The Haunted Mine was a mining tale, as the title indicates. But Castlemon didn't write only Westerns. The Boy Trapper Series—The Buried Treasure, The Boy Trapper, The Mail-Carrier—had nothing to do with the West; the Roughing It Series contained two with Western locale, George in Camp, or, Life on the Plains, and George at the Fort, or, Life Among the Soldiers, but the third, George at the Wheel, or, Life in the Pilot-house, speaks for itself, a river story. He wrote the Rod and Gun Series, Go-Ahead Series, Houseboat Series, Afloat and Ashore Series. And the six volumes of the War Series—True to His Colors, Rodney the Partisan, Rodney the Overseer, Marcy the Blockade-Runner, Marcy the Refugee, Sailor Jack the Trader, are all about the Civil War and well worth reading.

The Camp in the Foothills, Floating Treasure, Joe Wayring at Home, Oscar in Africa, Our Fellows, or, Skirmishing With the Swamp Dragoons, Snagged and Sunk, The Steel Horse, or, The Rambles of a Bicycle, Two Ways of Becoming a Hunter, The First Capture, Julian Mortimer, Guy Harris, the Runaway, were all by Castlemon, though the list probably is incomplete. How those old-time writers could turn them out! And they sold steadily, year after year.

(to be continued)

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NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Bob Smeltzer has been unable to write letters for a long time on account of arthritis in his hands. Don't let this stop you from writing him a few lines now and then for old times sake, any way. What do you say, fellows.

There's been 4 deaths in the Brotherhood this year. S. K. Doc Hunt died April 5th, Talbot C. Hatch, April 23d, John T. McIntyre, May 21st and John Medcraft Sept. 25th. God bless them wherever they are.

Benny Tighe wants odds or a run of Demarests Young American, about 1867 or 1868, or even only a few copies.

George Flaum only needs these numbers of Pluck and Luck #14, 91, 139, 166, 278, 282, 397 to complete his Jack Wright and Adventure Mystery set.

Ed. Kowalczyk, 73 Moore Avenue, Worcester, Mass., wants Liberty Boys of 76 #195 and 205.

The Clam Diggers and Duck Farmers from Bellerose, Ozone Park and Brooklyn were up to visit the Reckless one at Fisherville, Sept. 15th. A swell bunch this side of the county jail, outside, I should say. Ha Ha.

George French says his brother is on the sick list, has been for some time, and that he, George, went to the funeral of his Uncle around Nov. 7th, who was an old veteran of the Indian Wars and of the Spanish American War. He was in the battle of Wounded Knee and once served as Geronimo's guard.

Has anyone heard from Ray Caldwell, Carl Linville, and Dave Adams? Are they sick, or what is wrong pals?

Westbrook Pegler had a fine write-up on Alger books in the Worcester Evening Gazette, for Monday, Oct. 29 1951, as "Horatio Alger Jr. Books Reflect in Author Reformer Similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe."

Eddie Le Blanc will have another of his rare dime novel articles, #4, on the Hub 10 cent Novels in the January number of Roundup.

Wallace H. Waldrap says that the

Western Printing and Lithographing Co., of Racine, Wisc. has bought up a large supply of old novels for the purpose of reprinting, but they can't make up their mind about putting them on the market again. Why not drop them a line fellers and see if we can't help things along, and maybe they'll publish them after all.

Was down to my brothers, also Aunts and Cousins for 5 days, and came back Nov. 18th with a bad Cape Cod cold, from Falmouth, Mass. Stopped off to see the Le Blanc's at Fall River. They took me to Providence, R. I., where I caught a New England bus for home. Thought I was getting over it, but Friday and Sat. Nov. 23 and 24th, oh boy, but now I feel pretty good, but the cold is still with me, thanks to my folks and the Le Blancs for all they did for me.

"SIDE NOTES"

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